

## Message Text

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ACTION ITFE-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-01 AID-05 SS-15

NSC-05 SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 INSE-00 SCA-01

/060 W

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R 211214Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8055

INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 14632

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, LA, TH

SUBJ: REFUGEE RELIEF

1. IN THE COURSE OF A MEETING WITH MFA UNDER SECRETARY PHAEN WANNAMETHI TODAY, I INQUIRED REGARDING FONMIN CHATCHAI'S MEETINGS IN VENEVA LAST WEEK WITH THE U.N. HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES AND THE ICRC.

2. PHAEN STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY CHATCHAI THAT THE TALKS HAD BEEN MOST SATISFACTORY AND THAT BOTH UNHCR AND ICRC HAD EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN HELPING THAILAND COPE WITH ITS REFUGEE PROBLEM. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER HAD AGREED TO SEND SURVEY TEAMS TO THAILAND IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM AND THE HIGH COMMISSIONER HIMSELF WOULD COME IN SEPTEMBER AT THE INVITATION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

2. TURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF THE MEO, PHAEN READ FROM A REPORT IN THAI RECOMMENDING THAT ALL THE MEO BE TEMPORARILY RESETTLED IN THE NAN AREA IN NORTHERN  
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THAILAND. HE SAID THAT DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN HELD

WITH THE THAI AMBASSADOR TO LAOS WHO WAS TRYING TO ARRANGE THE RETURN OF APPROXIMATELY 70 MEO TO LAOS UNDER UNHCR AUSPICES. HE SAID THAT THE RTG DID NOT VIEW THE RESETTLEMENT OF LAO IN THIS AREA AS A "BUFFER" AGAINST LAOS NOR DID THE GOVERNMENT INTEND TO USE THE LAO IN A COUNTERINSURGENCY ROLE. INDEED IT WAS THE POLICY OF THE RTG TO DO WHAT IT COULD TO DISSIPATE LAO SUSPICIONS AND ALTHOUGH THE THAI WOULD NOT OF COURSE FORCE THE MEO TO RETURN, EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO INDUCE THEM TO REPATRIATE.

3. I NOTED THAT SOME NEWSPAPER STORIES HAD APPEARED ALLEGING THAT THE U.S. FAVORED THE RESETTLING OF MEO ALONG THE LAO BORDER AS A BUFFER AND REMINDED PHAEN THAT WHILE THIS WAS A THAI PROBLEM, I FELT THAT MEO SETTLEMENTS ON THE LAO FRONTIER WERE LIKELY TO BE VIEWED WITH CONCERN BY THE LAO AUTHORITIES AND BE THE CAUSE OF MINOR SCRIMAGES. PHAEN REPLIED THAT THE NAN AREA HAD BEEN CAREFULLY SURVEYED AND THAT PARTICIPATION IN THE TEMPORARY RESETTLEMENT OF THE MEO BY THE UNHCR WOULD ALLAY LAO APPREHENSION. I AGREED WITH PHAEN THAT UNHCR PARTICIPTION WOULD BE MOST DESIRABLE AND EMPHASIZED THAT IN MY VIEW REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNHCR SHOULD WORK IN THE RESETTLEMENT AREA IN ORDER TO ASSURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. WITH REGARD TO LAO REFUGEES, PHAEN DENIED THAT THE RTG HAD ANY INTENTION TO DEMAND THE RETURN TO LAOS OF WELL-KNOWN REFUGEES FROM THE VIENTIANE SIDE. HE NOTED THAT PHOUMI NOSAVAN HAD BEEN ENJOINED TO LIVE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND AND IMPLIED THAT LAO LEADERS WHO INTENDED TO REMAIN IN THAILAND MIGHT BE REQUESTED TO STAY AWAY FROM BORDER AREAS.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REFUGEE RELIEF, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MINISTERIAL VISITS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 21 JUL 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** CunninFX  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975BANGKO14632  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750251-0453  
**From:** BANGKOK  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Line Count:** 95  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ITFE  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** CunninFX  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 24 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <24 JUN 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** REFUGEE RELIEF  
**TAGS:** SREF, LA, TH, US, UNHCR, ICRC, (CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN), (PHAEN WANNAMETHI)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006